

Geology - Kentucky

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# STATE PARKS IN KENTUCKY

By  
WILLARD ROUSE JILLSON  
*Director and State Geologist*



KENTUCKY GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY  
1926

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*The  
Kentucky Geological  
Survey*

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DIRECTOR and STATE GEOLOGIST



SERIES VI  
PAMPHLET VI

*State Parks  
in Kentucky*

1926



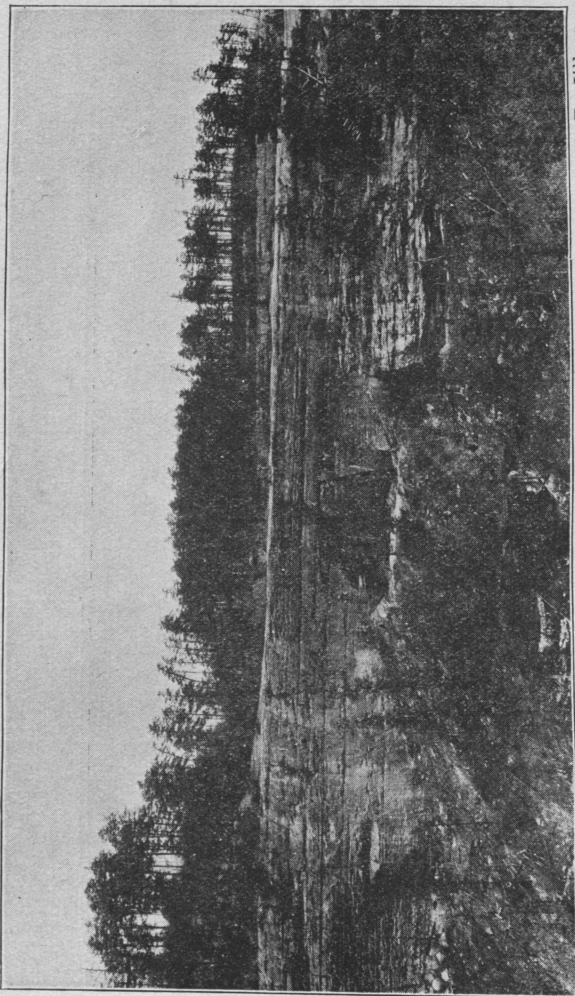


Photo W. R. Jillson.

#### NATURAL BRIDGE

Few natural bridges in the Eastern United States possess the stately dignity of this splendid Eastern Kentucky sandstone structure. Its structural characteristic is more that of the great natural rock arches of the Rocky Mountains and the great West than those of the Appalachianians.

# STATE PARKS *in* KENTUCKY

By  
WILLARD ROUSE JILLSON  
*Director and State Geologist,  
and  
Chairman, Kentucky State Park Commission*

*Six Illustrations and One Index Map  
of Kentucky*

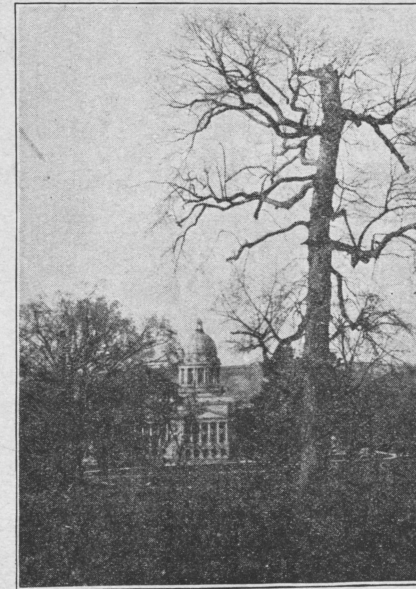
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## *State Parks in Kentucky\**

By DR. WILLARD ROUSE JILLSON,  
*Chairman, Kentucky State Park Commission, and  
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Within the last decade or two a new national movement has been developing in the United States. It has had as its main objective the establishment of large public recreational areas now commonly known as State Parks. This movement



THE CAPITOL AT FRANKFORT

originated in the federal policy of setting aside for public use large primeval tracts in the western country. These areas have come to be known as National Parks. They enjoy a wide and favorable reputation. In practically all cases they were established as units from much larger blocks of public lands and are to be

\* Anniversary Address, Perryville Battlefield, Perryville, Ky., Oct., 1925. Reprinted from 26th Biennial Report of the Ky. Dept. of Agriculture, Labor, and Statistics. 1925.



kept in their natural condition, with such improvements of roads and housing conditions as may be necessary, for all time.

#### IN PROGRESS FIFTY YEARS

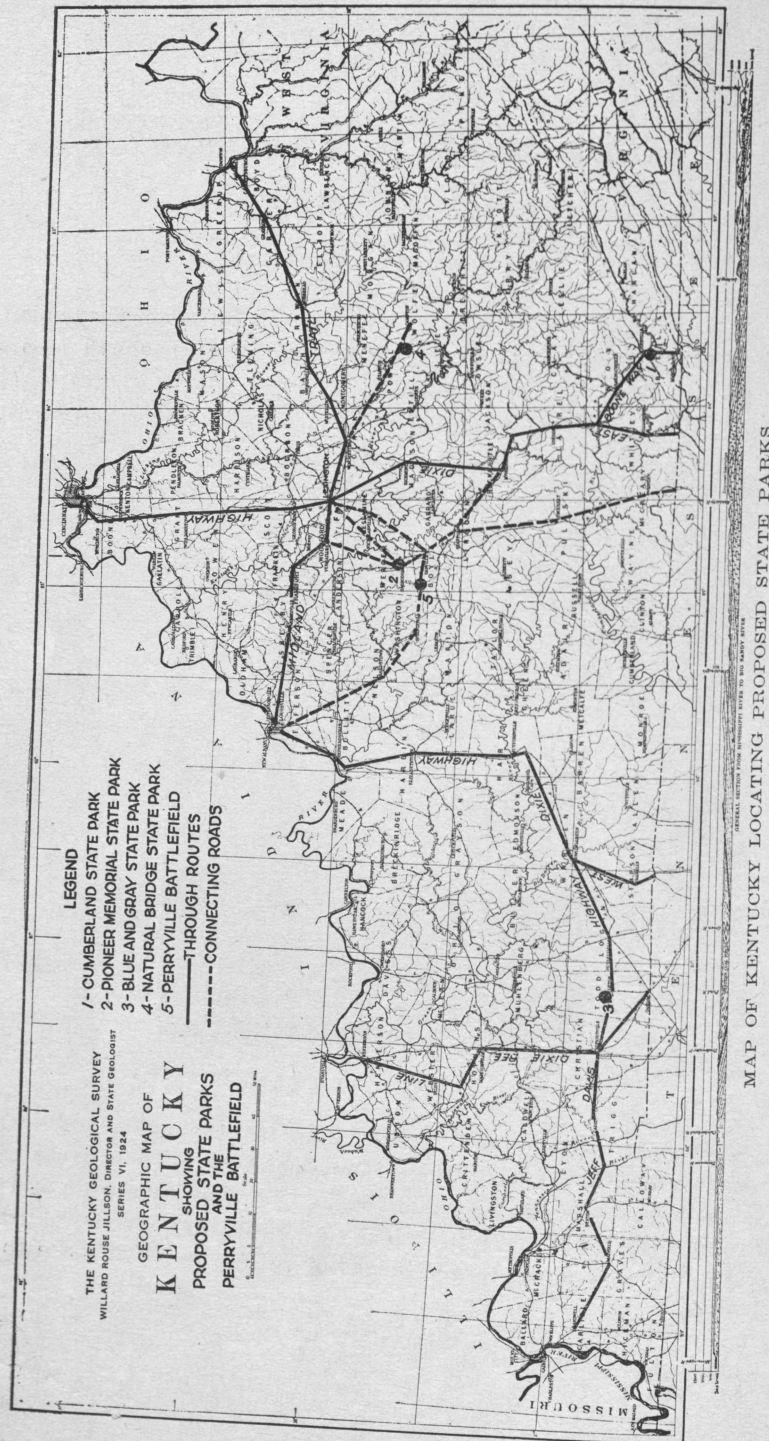
In the west the matter of national park establishment has been in progress more than half a century. It has not been difficult of attainment since the lands did not have to be purchased from private ownership. Public opinion now indicates that it was a wise policy which directed the establishment of these national parks and national forests, one which combined the best principles of conservation and public interest.

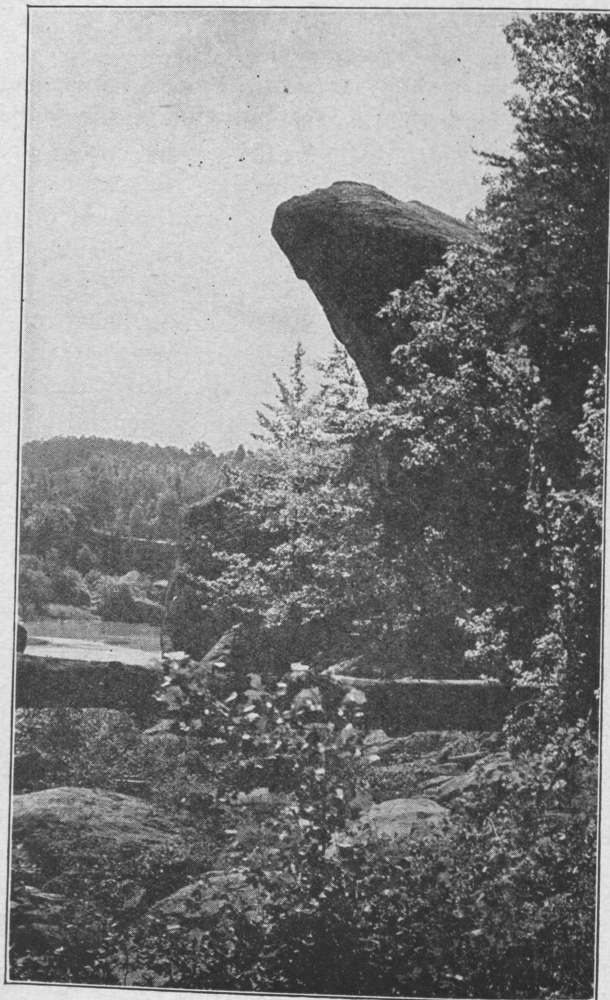
In the densely populated East, however, where practically all the land has been taken up for several generations, where timber has been cut and farming areas pushed back into the headwaters of the most remote mountain regions, it was not possible a quarter of a century ago to interest the public in the establishment of large park areas. As a result there has been up until recently only one national park in the eastern United States, although there are several federal forests which, for the most part, have been of rather late acquisition.

Up until the year 1900 the average American citizen apparently thought little and cared less about public parks in the eastern United States. He knew that the beauties of the high Rockies, the Sierras, and the Coast Ranges could only be found in the far west. In the scramble to tour the Yellowstone, the Yosemite and the Colorado Gorge, sight was lost of the many gems of landscape in the East, where if admittedly built on a smaller scale the beauties of nature are none the less real and satisfying.

#### MOTORS BRING REALIZATION

About this time an event occurred which was destined to revolutionize public opinion in regard to public parks. With the construction of the automobile attention was at once directed to the need of recreational areas within easy reach of the densely populated urban and agricultural districts in the eastern United States. The problem was not easy of solution, but with the strong will of all the people behind it, ways and means were





**BOULDER IN CUMBERLAND GORGE**  
 There is much in the Gorge of the Cumberland River to fascinate the eye of the nature lover. Giant rocks tilted and overturned by a capricious river abound.

found, curiously enough, for the establishment of large public parks even in the most congested districts.

An instance of this is seen in the Palisades Interstate Park of New York and New Jersey. At the same time the good roads movement had its birth, and the two going hand in hand have now reached proportions of the first order throughout the United States.

In Kentucky, as elsewhere, though more recently, the construction of high type through automobile roads developed the necessity for a large number of public recreational objectives—State Parks. Fortunately, in this state the per capita population is relatively small and though practically all of the land is held as individual or corporation property, much of it, due to the topographical figure of the landscape, has been but slightly changed from the original condition. This is particularly true of the rough mountain sections where important minerals are known not to occur. It is also true of a number of somewhat more restricted areas elsewhere in this state.

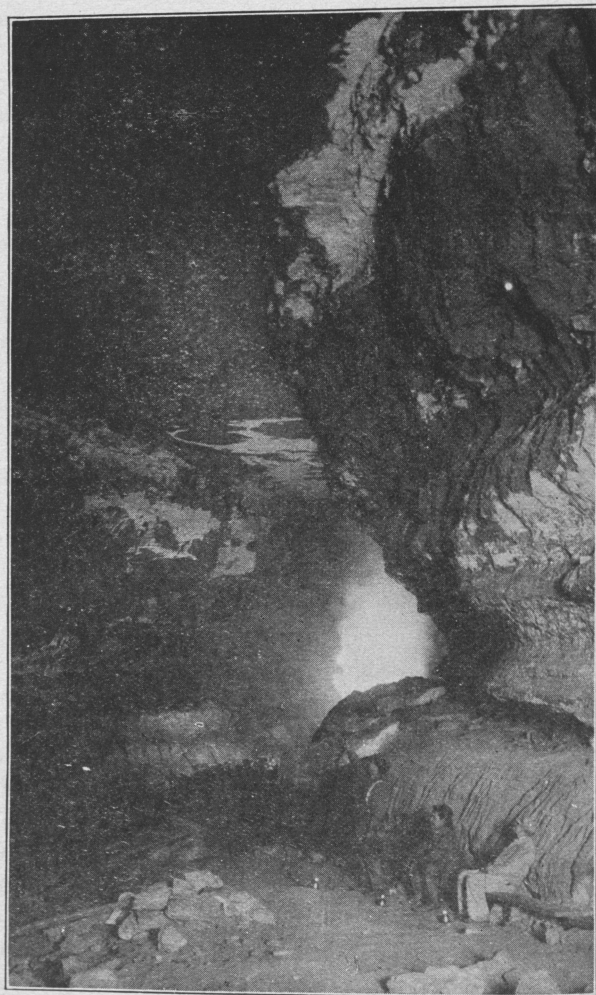
#### NATURE SCULPTURES WONDERS

Nature in following out her physical processes has sculptured out ridge and meander and subterranean stream. In all of the limestone regions of Kentucky, caves, caverns and rock houses abound. Some of these caverns, such as the group surrounding Mammoth Cave of Edmonson County and those of Carter County, have come to have not only a national, but an international reputation.

It is indeed fortunate that many of the natural beauties of Kentucky are still available, for in this state the movement for the establishment of parks, like that for the completion of a state wide system of high type roadways, has been slow in getting under way. Up until 1924, when the legislature of this state established the Kentucky State Park Commission, no definite plan had been adopted looking forward to the creation of public recreational areas adequate to meet the rapidly growing needs of our population.

It is true that at Frankfort the grounds surrounding the old and new Capitol buildings are in the nature of a state park, and it can be said with certain satisfaction that the establishment





THE STAR CHAMBER

Of the many visual treats in the Mammoth Cave none attracts more attention than the Star Chamber. Thousands speculate on this unique phenomenon annually.

of the "Old Kentucky Home" at Bardstown as a state shrine possesses features similar to those incorporated in some State Park programmes. Yet neither of these possesses fully the features now so urgently demanded by the public, though each has its special attractions and is annually visited by many thousands of people.

An adequate State Park programme for Kentucky should embody, first, a careful examination of all unusual natural areas; second, a review of all areas identified in an important way with the State and national history; third, a selection of certain regional tracts that embody the best ideals of State Parks established elsewhere, and fourth, a well directed effort, both private and public, to acquire some of the selected areas by gift of deed for actual use by the public as State Parks.

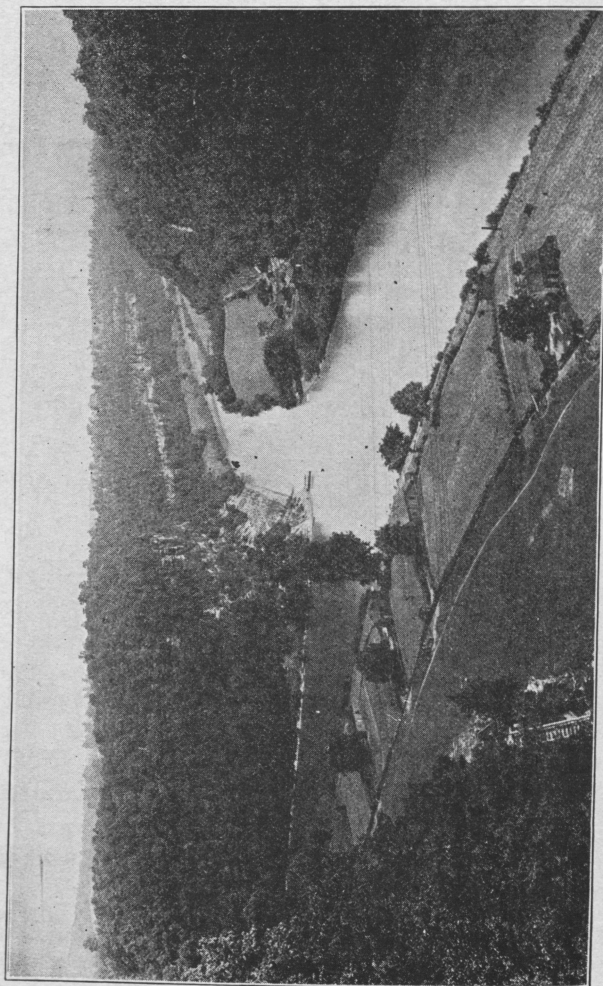
The Commission named by the last legislature has attempted to follow such a program. Shortly after its organization a survey of the state was made, and areas suitable for State Parks were indicated. Among these were the Breaks of Sandy, the Cumberland Gap, the Cumberland Falls, the Carter Caves, the Kentucky River Gorge, the Mammoth Cave, Reelfoot Lake and others, including such historical places as the old forts at Boonesboro and Harrodsburg.

#### PINE MOUNTAIN FIRST

The response throughout the state was immediate and genuine. The first definite offer came from Pineville in the form of a large block of land on Pine Mountain and Clear Creek. Deeds were drawn and accepted by the Commission for the proposed Cumberland State Park. Rapidly following came other offers of gift of deed to tracts suitably located at Harrodsburg and Elkton. These have also been approved.

Recently the Louisville & Nashville Railroad offered to the Commonwealth its fully developed park at Natural Bridge. This matter will receive final consideration at an early date. A number of other gifts of land have been offered in both eastern and western Kentucky which are now receiving consideration.

Among these is the Perryville battlefield, already a state reservation. On this ground, hallowed by the blood of hundreds of loyal Kentuckians, we are gathered in a great anniversary



MEETING OF THE WATERS  
A splendid view showing the gorge of the Kentucky River (left) at the mouth of the Dix River. The latter stream has recently been dammed for hydro-electric power.

Photo W. R. Jillson.

service. Here was fought in 1862 the most sanguine engagement of the state. It was in large measure the Gettysburg of the west. It decided important issues of the western campaign and definitely altered the course of the Civil War.

Where now are the armies of Bragg and of Buell, the host in blue, and the regiments in gray? Gone, gone forever from this sunny slope, most of them to join the encampment of the heroic dead. Others returned to their homelands and their loved ones far from this scene of fratricidal strife stand at this time reminiscent as the sun of life drops low.

#### MEMORY OF PIONEERS

In all her progress in field and stream and city, Kentucky, the first child of the Golden West, must not forget the men who made her great. The pioneer, the Indian fighter, the soldier of '61, each in turn deserves a lasting memorial from the hand of an appreciative Commonwealth.

There is a place in Kentucky's state park program for the Perryville battlefield. Certainly no part of this Commonwealth typifies more thoroughly all of the hope and despair and heroism that marked this great struggle of American arms.

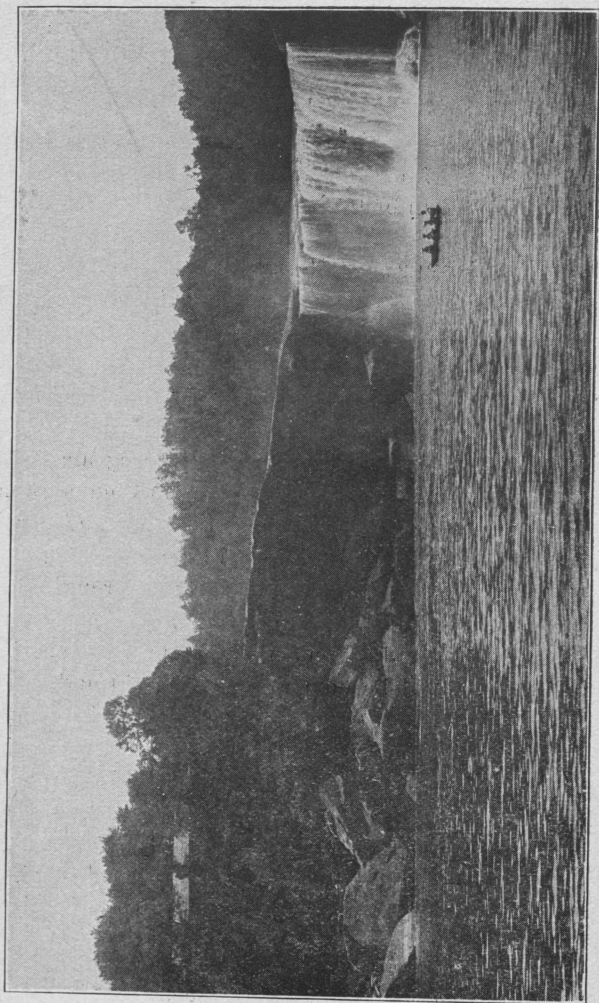
In the peace and prosperity of a great country reunited and fulfilling a world destiny under the principles of democracy, it is nothing less than a civic duty that directs our footsteps here.

This battlefield should become well known throughout our country wherever American history is repeated, wherever the starry flag is flown. It should rank with Gettysburg, Lookout Mountain and Vicksburg. Kentuckians with souls heroic and hearts aflame have sanctified this ground for the ages. Kentuckians, now in thoughtful mood, may tread these paths, and, mindful of the glorious past these graves bespeak, feel the inspiration to a higher idealism, a better and a truer Americanism.

"The muffled drum's sad roll has beat  
The soldier's last tattoo.  
No more on life's parade shall meet  
That brave and fallen few;  
On Fame's eternal camping ground  
Their silent tents are spread,  
And Glory guards, with solemn round,  
The bivouac of the dead."

O'Hara





#### CUMBERLAND FALLS

A beauty spot in every sense of the word, Kentuckians should know more about and value more highly this majestic waterfall. It possesses now every attribute of a well chosen state park. The pity is that it is not one already.